THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (e) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Mining of limestone in N.E. States

470. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the North-Eastern States especially Meghalaya have surplus potential for mining limestone (mainstay for Cement units) which is being exported to Bangladesh without any value addition;

(b) whether many private investors evincing interest in investing in North-East on Cement manufacturing units with an aggregate capacity of more than 7 million tonnes, are now abandoning their investment plans due to discontinuance of excise duty exemption by Government; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) As per National Council for Cement & Building Materials (NCCBM) Report, Meghalaya has approximately 6.3 billion tonnes of cement grade limestone reserves. One cement unit Lafarge Umiam Pvt. Ltd., is exporting limestone to Bangladesh.

(b) and (c) No such information is available.

Patent of Ponni variety of rice

471. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that famous Ponni variety of rice grown exclusively in Cauvery delta in Tamil Nadu has not been registered for Geographical Indication (GI) in India;

(b) whether a Malaysian retail giant Syarikat Faiza has registered Ponni rice under the Malaysian Trade Mark Act;

(c) whether in the year 1977 a patent was awarded to a US Firm for Basmati variety of aromatic rice on which India had to fight for over four years to get the US patent reversed;

(d) whether the Tamil Nadu Agriculture University has decided to contest the Ponni trade mark registration in Malaysia; and

(e) if so, details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) to (e) As per records of the Geographical Indications Registry, no application has been filed in respect of Ponni seeking registration under the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.